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UNHCR ACTIVITIES FINANCED BY VOLUNTARY FUNDS: REPORT FOR 1993-1994 AND PROPOSED PROGRAMMES AND BUDGET FOR 1995

PART II. ASIA AND OCEANIA

Section 10 - Thailand

(submitted by the High Commissioner)

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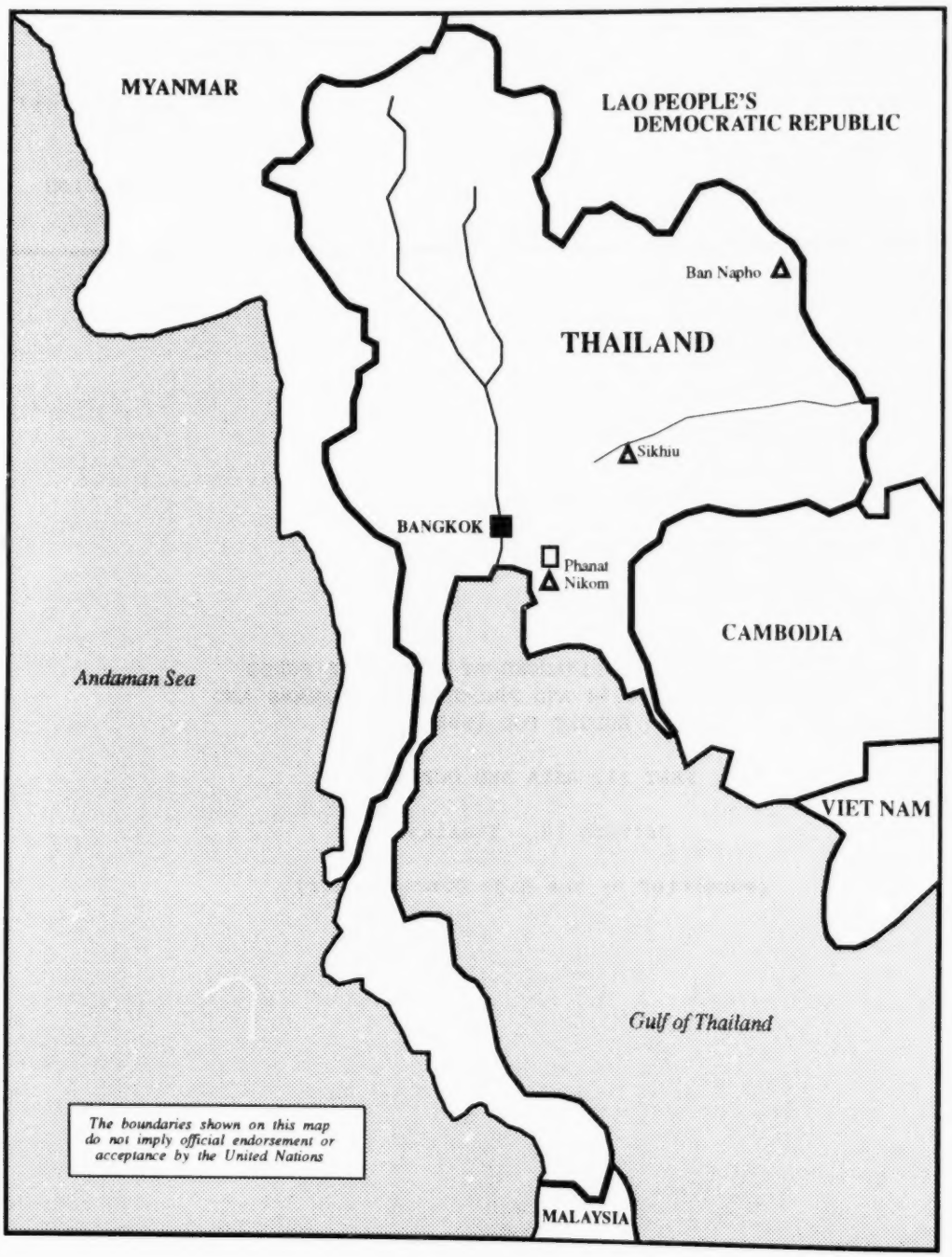
THAILAND


MYANMAR
LAO PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC
Ban Napho
THAILAND
Sikhiu
BANGKOK
Phanat Nikom
CAMBODIA
Andaman Sea
VIET NAM
Gulf of Thailand
The boundaries shown on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations
MALAYSIA
0
200
Km.
Capital
Camp or holding centre for refugees or displaced persons
Transit centre

II.10 THAILAND

Country Overview

Characteristics of the refugee population

1. At 31 December 1993, the total number of Indo-Chinese refugees and asylum-seekers assisted by UNHCR stood at 36,600, which represents a 40 per cent reduction compared to 60,600 at the end of 1992. The Indo-Chinese population is sheltered in three refugee camps and comprises 26,700 Lao, 9,800 Vietnamese, and less than 100 Cambodians. In addition, some 3,000 non-Indo-Chinese, mainly from Myanmar, were living in urban areas, with the exception of a small group of Myanmar refugees who lived in a semi-open camp, the so-called "Safe Area". A further 74,500 Myanmar nationals are considered to be of concern to UNHCR. Women constitute some 44 per cent of the UNHCR assisted population in Thailand while 47 per cent are children aged 0 to 18.

2. At the beginning of 1993, Thailand still hosted a large Cambodian refugee population in the UNHCR-assisted camp at Khao I Dang and in two camps on the Thai-Cambodian border assisted by the United Nations Border Relief Operation (UNBRO). The voluntary repatriation of 132,329 Cambodians in 126 convoys was completed in April 1993, thus bringing to 362,333 the cumulative number of Cambodians who had repatriated from Thailand to Cambodia between 30 March 1992 and 30 April 1993 with UNHCR assistance. In addition, a group of 801 was moved by the Thai authorities in April 1993 and received UNHCR assistance in Cambodia. An additional 22,038 spontaneous returns also took place, out of whom 5,306 sought and received UNHCR assistance in Cambodia.

3. All Lao refugees and asylum-seekers are accomodated in the Ban Napho and Phanat Nikhom camps. Those in Ban Napho are expected to return eventually to the Lao People's Democratic Republic whereas those in Phanat Nikhom are being processed for resettlement. In 1993, the status of ten Laotians who were previously unregistered was regularized. Additionally, 6,827 Lao refugees were resettled to third countries and 3,925 repatriated to the Lao People's Democratic Republic (LPDR).

4. The Vietnamese refugees and asylum-seekers are sheltered in the Sikhiu and Phanat Nikhom camps. The Sikhiu camp shelters Vietnamese undergoing refugee status determination procedures and those who have been determined not to be refugees. Vietnamese undergoing processing for either resettlement or voluntary repatriation are accommodated in Phanat Nikhom camp. In 1993, a total of 2,233 Vietnamese asylum-seekers arrived in UNHCR assisted camps: they had been residing on the Thai-Cambodian border before being transferred inside Thailand in April 1993 for refugee status determination or for resettlement, depending on their arrival date, in accordance with the Comprehensive Plan of Action (CPA). Meanwhile, 1,445 Vietnamese departed for resettlement to third countries and 3,499 repatriated voluntarily to Viet Nam.

Major developments (1993 and first quarter 1994)

5. The overall refugee population in Thailand decreased by 39 per cent as a result of fewer new arrivals, renewed interest in voluntary repatriation programmes to the Lao People's Democratic Republic and the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam, completion of the Cambodian repatriation from Khao I Dang, as well as ongoing efforts towards resettlement.

6. The Cambodian repatriation from Khao I Dang and the UNBRO border camps continued in 1993 and was completed by the end of April 1993. Every effort was made to ensure voluntariness and a return in safety and dignity. In all 362,209 Cambodians were repatriated from Thailand with full UNHCR assistance, and 132,329 in the period January to April 1993. The remaining Cambodian camps were officially closed in 1993 as follows :

Site 8	22 January 1993
Khao I Dang	3 March 1993
Site 2	30 March 1993

7. Within the framework of the CPA, the refugee status determination procedure continued. By the end of 1993, most first instance decisions had been announced to the Lao and Vietnamese asylum-seekers (only 257 Vietnamese were still awaiting first instance decisions). All decisions for Vietnamese who had appealed against first instance decisions will be served by June 1994. Some 7,330 Vietnamese were still awaiting appeal decisions at the end of 1993.

8. Efforts continued to strengthen the individual counselling of Vietnamese asylum-seekers determined not to be refugees in order to encourage them to return home voluntarily. "Special Procedures" for unaccompanied minors and categories of special humanitarian concern were successfully completed. Efforts to implement the decisions by the Special Committee were underway.

9. On 15 and 16 July 1993, a sixth tripartite meeting took place in Savannakhet (Lao People's Democratic Republic) between the Royal Thai Government (RTG), the Lao People's Democratic Republic and UNHCR, at which a joint communiqué was issued by the concerned parties who reaffirmed their willingness to fully cooperate on the question of voluntary repatriation of Laotians still in camps in Thailand. The meeting also adopted a timeframe for the closure of Ban Napho camp by the end of 1994. By the end of 1993, the Chiang Kham camp was closed. Residents of Chiang Kham were transferred to Ban Napho pending repatriation, or to Phanat Nikhom for resettlement processing. Joint UNHCR/RTG missions to Ban Napho camp have taken place with a view to assessing the level of assistance still required without undermining the promotion of voluntary repatriation.

10. The total number of Myanmar nationals on the Thai side of the border is estimated at around 74,500. Most receive assistance from a consortium of non-governmental organizations (NGOs). UNHCR involvement with this population is limited to its traditional protection role and very limited material assistance is channelled through NGOs.

11. Some 1,650 persons who were residents of the Chiang Kham and Ban Napho camps had their claims to Thai citizenship positively reviewed and are no longer included in the UNHCR assisted caseload.

Programme objectives and priorities

12. Within the framework of the CPA, emphasis will continue to be placed on the successful implementation of durable solutions on behalf of Lao and Vietnamese, i.e. voluntary repatriation and resettlement. Repatriation will be encouraged through a number of promotional activities and further streamlining of programme activities with a view to further reducing the number of camps and the number of beneficiaries benefiting from care and maintenance. In terms of camp consolidation, only two camps will remain open by the end of 1994: Sikhiu and Phanat Nikhom.

13. For Vietnamese, a priority is the completion of the refugee status determination process by June 1994 as well as the speedy return to Viet Nam by the end of 1994 of unaccompanied minors and vulnerable cases for whom the Special Committee has determined that it is in their best interest to return. The objective is to repatriate all Vietnamese expected to return to Viet Nam by the end of 1995.

14. Efforts will be made to repatriate the few Cambodians in Thailand by the end of 1994.

15. UNHCR will continue with the refugee status determination of non-Indo-Chinese; the urban caseload of concern to UNHCR will be provided with medical services, mental health/counselling, education and vocational training and monthly living allowances. The small caseload of Myanmar refugees sheltered in the "Safe Area" will also benefit from a monthly living allowance.

16. UNHCR may have to extend humanitarian assistance to Cambodians who may seek temporary refuge in Thailand as a result of ongoing fighting in Cambodia.

Arrangements for implementation/related inputs

17. The Operations Centre for Displaced Persons (OCDP) of the Ministry of Interior (MOI) in the Royal Thai Government is UNHCR's main implementing partner for the delivery of assistance. The MOI will further delegate implementation of certain sectors of assistance to the following NGOs: Catholic Office for Emergency Relief and Refugees (COERR), International Rescue Committee (IRC), Médecins sans Frontières (MSF), Save the Children Federation/USA, the Thai Red Cross Society, Zoa Refugee Care Netherlands and the American Refugee Committee (ARC).

18. As far as the refugee status determination under the CPA is concerned, UNHCR has two implementing partners: the OCDP of MOI and COERR.

19. In addition, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) was involved in implementing resettlement and repatriation related pre-departure activities.

20. Some 6,350 mt of rice valued at $ 1,778,000 and some 104 mt of vegetable oil valued at $ 131,560 are planned to be provided as a donation in kind, by the European Union in 1994. The European Union has also pledged $ 16,443 for the purchase of 104 mt of salt in 1994.

General Programmes

Care and maintenance

(a) Variations in planned activities in 1993

21. Care and maintenance was provided under General Programmes in Thailand in 1993 covering food, transport, domestic items, water, sanitation, health, shelter, community services, education, legal assistance and agency operational support.

22. In the course of 1993, the OCDP requested, and received, assistance from UNHCR to complete the processing in Lao camps of persons claiming Thai nationality. The processing was successfully completed and some 1,650 persons were granted Thai citizenship and were taken off the UNHCR assisted caseload in early 1994.

23. In mid-September and October, UNHCR withdrew its presence from the "Safe Area" for Myanmar nationals and assistance was also suspended as a result of a break-in at the UNHCR Office and threats against a UNHCR officer. The situation returned to normal in November.

24. The number of people returning voluntarily to the Lao People's Democratic Republic from Thailand in 1993 (3,925) was the highest ever reached but nevertheless fell short of the original target set at 6,000. The limited absorption capacity on the Lao side hampered the return of an additional 3,000 persons who had applied for voluntary repatriation.

25. A major factor hampering the implementation of voluntary repatriation for Vietnamese was the delay in processing appeals within the framework of the refugee status determination. Similarly, no resettlement action could be undertaken for those who would eventually be recognized as refugees during the appeal proceedings. Despite these obstacles, 3,499 Vietnamese nevertheless returned to Viet Nam in 1993, a figure which is considered satisfactory under the circumstances.

(b) 1994 planned implementation

26. Care and maintenance for 34,500 Indo-Chinese will continue throughout 1994 pending the successful implementation of durable solutions through both resettlement and voluntary repatriation to Viet Nam and the Lao People's Democratic Republic. More emphasis will be placed on the identification of special needs of vulnerable individuals prior to return, such as unaccompanied minors, survivors of violence, female heads of families, and those medically at risk.

27. Efforts to implement activities and training targeted specifically at women will intensify, promoting women's groups and addressing concerns of both women and children.

28. Care and maintenance for an average caseload of 2,900 non-Indo-Chinese urban refugees will continue.

(c) **1995 programme proposals**

29. The proposed allocation for 1995 will be substantially less than the revised 1994 estimate as a result of a reduced refugee/asylum seeker population due to ongoing resettlement and voluntary repatriation and the fact that there are no significant numbers of new Indo-Chinese arrivals. Assistance will continue to be provided for food, water, health and education. There are no plans for the construction of any new buildings, water points or other types of infrastructure. Streamlining of programme activities so as to be conducive to voluntary repatriation will continue, as will efforts to promote the participation and involvement of women. The average number of Indo-Chinese beneficiaries in 1995 will be 16,700.

30. The small urban caseload of non-Indo-Chinese will continue to receive assistance such as monthly living allowances, medical and mental health/counselling services, education and vocational training. The estimated number of beneficiaries is 2,900 for 1995.

31. The breakdown of care and maintenance assistance in 1994 and 1995 is as follows (in US dollars):

Sector	Initial 1994	Revised 1994	Initial 1995
Food	900,413	797,283	508,841
Transport	190,233	183,306	221,181
Domestic needs	3,517,816	3,412,053	2,855,889
Water	73,230	91,318	89,803
Sanitation	139,034	146,443	100,670
Health	552,896	668,774	666,731
Shelter	295,452	303,976	267,561
Community services	105,327	136,414	134,479
Education	164,576	158,541	158,855
Legal assistance	310,233	47,704	49,985
Agency op.support	639,790	942,488	928,405
Project personnel	1,078,300	0	0
Total	7,967,300	6,888,300	5,982,400

Resettlement

32. UNHCR objectives in 1995 are to facilitate the resettlement of 4,000 Lao refugees and to find solutions for any Vietnamese residual caseload left from 1994.

Special Programmes

Comprehensive Plan of Action for Indo-Chinese Refugees (CPA)

Care and maintenance

33. Costs related to the care and maintenance of Indo-Chinese refugees and those screened out will continue to be partly covered under CPA funds in 1994 and 1995.

34. In mid-1994, legal assistance will be discontinued as the refugee status determination procedure will be completed. In 1994 and 1995, the assistance programmes for Indo-Chinese will be reviewed on a regular basis. Assistance will be maintained at an acceptable level in the fields of food, shelter, health and education.

35. UNHCR plans to complete all its activities related to refugee status determination by the end of June 1994, when all appeal decisions will have been served.

Voluntary Repatriation

(a) **1994 planned implementation**

36. An estimated 5,000 Laotians and 4,000 Vietnamese are expected to repatriate voluntarily. Promotional activities on repatriation will continue. Efforts will aim at decreasing and eliminating any activity which may hamper the decision making process. The special needs of vulnerable returnees will be assessed prior to return to the countries of origin with a view to providing adequate reintegration assistance.

(b) **1995 programme proposals**

37. UNHCR will endeavour to repatriate up to 9,000 Laotians and the remaining caseload of approximately 4,000 Vietnamese determined not to be refugees. Under this project, costs related to transport, domestic needs, community services and agency operational support will continue to be covered.

Programme Delivery and Administrative Support Costs

(a) **Variations in planned activities in 1993**

38. In 1993, total expenditure was higher than expected, and related to increased expenditure under salaries and common staff costs. This was as a result of an increase in general service salary scales, which came into effect as of 1 November 1993, and due to the high level of rotation and appointment of new staff in Thailand. Furthermore, the contracts of eleven legal consultants involved in eligibility determination activities were extended in 1993, with a 15 per cent increase in their remuneration.

(b) **1994 planned implementation**

39. In the course of 1994, the completion of the eligibility determination process under the Comprehensive Plan of Action (CPA) and the planned closure of Ban Napho camp are expected to result in a reduction of staff in UNHCR. In terms of staffing changes, the post of Assistant Representative (Programme) was discontinued as of 1 March 1994. The posts of Associate Representative (Legal), Eligibility Officer and Associate Administrative Officer are also to be discontinued as of 30 June 1994.

40. The total revised 1994 requirements are however higher than the initial estimate, mainly as a result of the increase in general service salary scales and the extension of the posts of Repatriation Officer and Senior Regional Social Services Officer until 30 June 1995 and 31 December 1995 respectively. Furthermore, the post of Assistant Protection Officer (JPO) has been extended until April 1995. Staff costs have also increased to take account of the recruitment of additional legal officers under temporary assistance.

41. Under non-staff costs local/regional travel costs have increased to take account of increased travel planned for the Regional Social Services and Regional Telecommunications Officers. Furthermore, costs for local travel are expected to be higher due to an increase in the daily subsistance rates for Thailand. Increased costs for contractual services are related to production costs for Public Information activities. Revised requirements under general operating expenses, particularly utility costs, and office supplies and materials have been reduced with the closure of certain Field Offices in Thailand and the availability of stationery items locally at lower costs. Costs for acquisition of furniture and equipment have been revised downwards and cover the replacement of one photocopier and one fax machine in the Branch Office in Bangkok.

(c) **1995 Programme proposals**

42. It is foreseen that the staffing levels in 1995 could be further reduced during the course of the year. The posts of Associate Protection Officer (NO), Associate Field Officer in Nakhorn Phanom (NO), Durable Solutions Assistant in Chiang Kham, Field Officer in Nakhorn Phanom, Administrative Clerk, Finance Clerk and Registry Clerk are planned for discontinuation as of 31 December 1994. By the end of 1995, it is anticipated that Sikhiu camp may also be closed down. Consequently, the total initial 1995 estimate is substantially lower than the 1994 revised requirements, with an overall reduction in costs under all budget chapters.

UNHCR EXPENDITURE IN THAILAND

(in thousands of United States dollars)

1993	1994		1995	
AMOUNT OBLIGATED	ALLOCATION APPROVED BY 1993 EXCOM	PROPOSED REVISED ALLOCATION	SOURCE OF FUNDS AND TYPE OF ASSISTANCE	PROPOSED ALLOCATION/ PROJECTION
GENERAL PROGRAMMES (1)				
7,192.6	7,967.3	6,888.3	CARE AND MAINTENANCE	5,982.4
15.3 a/	–	–	LOCAL SETTLEMENT	–
663.7 b/	–	–	RESETTLEMENT	–
–	–	2,487.9	PROGRAMME DELIVERY See Annexes I a and II a	2,253.5
7,871.6	**7,967.3**	**9,376.2**	**SUB-TOTAL OPERATIONS**	**8,235.9**
1,273.9	953.8	412.0	ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT See Annexes I b and II b	342.9
9,145.5	**8,921.1**	**9,788.2**	**T O T A L (1)**	**8,578.8**
SPECIAL PROGRAMMES (2)				
3,513.7	211.0		CAMBODIA REPATRIATION	
–	–	138.2	PROGRAMME DELIVERY	71.5
–	–	43.8	ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT	–
3,762.1	3,946.1	3,163.0	COMPREHENSIVE PLAN OF ACTION	1,766.9
–	–	774.3	PROGRAMME DELIVERY	327.2
2,986.0	86.2	–	OTHER TRUST FUNDS Various Assistance	–
–	–	156.8	ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT SRI LANKA RETURNEE PROGRAMME	150.5
123.6	179.8	35.0	Junior Professional Officer	35.0
10,385.4	**4,423.1**	**4,311.1**	**T O T A L (2)**	**2,351.1**
19,530.9	**13,344.2**	**14,099.3**	**GRAND TOTAL (1+2)**	**10,929.9**

a/ obligation incurred against Overall Allocation
b/ of which US$ 1,933 incurred against Overall Allocation